THE
Humble DECLARATION,
Cordial CONGRATULATION,
AND
Lowly SUPPLICATION
Of divers MINISTERS of the GOSPEL,
in the *WESTERN* Part of
YORKSHIRE,
Commonly known by the Name of
CRAVEN.

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The Humble Declaration, Cordial Congratulation, and Lowly Supplication of divers Miniſters of the Goſpel, in that Weſtern Part of Yorkſhire, *Commonly known by the Name of* Craven.

MAy it not be judged a preſumption, nor expoſe us to a publick cenſure, that ſo few, ſo inconſiderable perſons, in ſo remote and obſcure a Corner of the Nation ſhould take upon us to make ſo publick an Expreſſion; It is not out of Ambition to be known (our Obſcurity we confeſs much more then our Innocency hath in theſe Dangerous times been our Safety) But out of a Conſcientious Obligation to make known, what we ſuppoſe a Sin to Conceal, our due ſenſe of the paſt ſufferings of this Church and Nation, our preſent hopes of a happy Cloſure and Compoſure, and our deſire of a furure full and final Settlement upon Religious and Righteous foundations, in Order to which we take the boldneſs in all Humility, to declare, congratulate, and ſupplicate; And

Firſt, we do heartily and penitently declare, that we do (as we have great and juſt Cauſe) look upon all the evil of puniſhment, which hath been ſtrange, ſad, and of long continuance upon theſe Nations, to have been inflicted by the juſt Judgment of the Righteous God, for the evil of Sin, which hath been much more hainous then our Puniſhment grievous; It being of the Lords Mercies, that in his Juſtice we have not been Conſumed, and that ſo wicked and Unworthy a People are yet a People; and further with Shame and Confuſion of face we religiouſly Confeſs, that the Sins of us, the Paſtors have been as provoking as the Sins of the People; yea that the Paſtors have even provoked the People to Sin, we who ſhould have guided them, having cauſed them to erre, and as Judgment, ſo Sin hath begun at the houſe of God: wherefore we deſire to acknowledge, and we beſeech all our Brethren to acknowledge with us, that the one and only cauſe of our Miſeries have been our Miſcarriages, and we pray for our ſelves and the Nation that we may ſigh and cry for all the Abominations done in the Land, that we may every one ſearch and try our wayes, and meet the Lord by repentance, who we hope is meeting us in Mercy, and that the Sacrifice of broken and contrite ſpirits may prepare and precede, that our Sacrifices of Praiſe, may be a ſweet and ſavory Incenſe unto the Moſt High.

Secondly, With humbleſt thanks acknowledging the Lord to be the onely Author of our as Miraculous as Merciful Deliverance out of the inexplicable (and as our ſins and feares taught us to Conceive) Inextricable Labyrinth of Confuſion and Diſtraction, which had not his infinite Clemency and Compaſſion interpoſed, would have been our utter and inevitable Deſtruction: we do moſt cordially congratulate all thoſe noble Inſtruments of that great and good work, our moſt redoubted Patriots, whom the Lord hath inſpired with the Courage to attempt, endued with the Conſtancy to Advance, and we more then hope will bleſs with the felicity to complete a happy Peace

to these Nations; In restoring our Lawful Soveraign to his Crown and Kingdomes, our Parliaments to their Freedome and Priviledges, and our People to their Laws and Properties; and unto our Congratulation we joyn the humble Apprecation of the Continuance of that Courage, Constancy and Felicity, that the work so happily begun, may be speedily finished, that we may all cry Grace, Grace unto it: To which end.

Thirdly, Since as we humbly conceive the surest Method of healing the State, is to begin with the Church, we in all lowlinesse supplicate; That as our National Sins have made betwixt our God and us a separation, Our Union may be made by the Endevour of a National Reformation. Our Reformation, some indeed have told us, and would have taught us was a Toleration, and a free liberty to profess what every one pleased, but we have found and felt by an experience to be lamented, that Liberty to have degenerated into a most impious Licentiousnes, and that Toleration intolerable, leaving men to an indifferency as to be of any, so to be of no Religion: But we hope we need not inform those Prudent, Pious, and Zealous Magistrates, to whom we present this Addres; that all the Godly Magistrates of *Judah* and *Israel* under the Law have endevoured to suppres all false, and have asserted and supported the true Religion, and worship of God; That our Blessed Saviour under the Gospel, doth severely check the guides and Governours of the Church, for suffering, and not suppressing the Doctrines of *Jezebel*, *Balaam* and the *Nicolaitanes*, That the Toleration of several religions is a Condemnation of our late happy Reformation out of the Egyptian Bondage and Darknes of Romish Ignorance, Error and Superstition, branding with a black Coal our blessed Reformers, and calling our holy Martyrs Malefactors; finally, if we may judge of the Tree by its fruits, All those Monstrous Errors, Portentous Heresies, and Blasphemous Tenents, broached and vented amongst us, which make all good Christians ears to tingle and hearts to tremble, have been not casually contemporary with, but causally consequent from our Toleration, the very fruits, effects, and proper productions of the so much cryed up Liberty.

But here we desire not to be misunderstood, when we plead against a Toleration, we mean a Toleration of diverse Religions, of professions divers in worship and in substantial and fundamental points, a liberty in circumstantials and opinions not *De fide*, in those who are of the same faith and Religion, so long as by Schism they endanger not the peace of the Church, nor by undutifulnes disturb the peace of the State; may, and by Scripture grounds we humbly conceive ought to be indulged to all sober Christians, and may consist with unity and Reformation.

And since the work of Reformation is not every ones work, nor to be done in a Tumultuary Manner, by the multitude or by private persons, but by such as are not onely qualified with Piety, but clothed with Authority, not as we judge (however some have with sad succes thought and practised otherwise) the Ministers work without the Magistrate if Christian, nor yet the Magistrates without the Minister; we make it our humble and earnest Petition, That the Supreme Authority would Call and Command a National Synod of grave, godly, sound, sober and Moderate Divines, to treat upon, Compose and Conclude our Differences in Religion; for surely as a Parliament is the best Physician for the State, so is a Counsel for the Church, it being found by the practise

practise of the Apostles themselves, and of the Church since the Apostles that Councels under God are the most hopeful and probable means to eradicate Heresie, and to establish Truth and unity. In which Councel not presuming to prescribe or to Anticipate, we shall meekly with submission, and under Correction propose some things which (amongst many others) we conceive meet for their pious Consideration, in reference to the Church in general, some things in reference to the Ministry in particular.

In reference to the Church; First, since our Distractions and Divisions have risen much from our Division in Judgment, and since the Gospell enjoynes us to hold fast the form of sound words, to keep the pattern of wholsome Doctrine, to Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the Saints; and as with the heart Man believeth unto righteousness, so with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation; we desire that there may be (according to the godly and laudable practise of this and other Reformed Churches) set forth a publick Confession of the faith of our *English* Church, the Articles whereof may be few, plain, short, fundamental, built and bottomed upon Evident Scriptures, that even themselves by their own Evidence may Convince Gainsayers.

Secondly, Since as the Jewes say of their *Masoreth* that it was the Hedge of the Law, so we may truely say of Discipline it is the Hedge of Doctrine, one great Cause of the spreading of false Doctrine, being the want of due Discipline; That a Church Government may be set up and settled, as near as may be to Scripture Rules and primitive practise: and here since some stand up for one kind of Government and others for another, we take leave to mention and commend a rule offered by a Grave Divine in such an address as this, that the Comprehensive way may be embraced in Matters of difference, that is to say that way, that may satisfie all as much as may be, as in the Case of *Episcopacy* and *Presbytery*; where some would have the Government to be by *Episcopacy*, others by *Presbytery*, let them be both joyned in a Moderate subordination to end the Quarrel, which is otherwise never like to be decided.

Thirdly, Since the publick worship of God, is the most publick Testimony we can give of our Religion, and of our being the people of God, and it much concerns us rightly to approach the Dreadful Majesty of our God, who is a Spirit, and will be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth, there being little Difference between not worshipping him at all, and not worshipping him aright, the undue performance of his worship being by so much the more dangerous, by how much his worship it self is more excellent; and it being not more necessary we should serve him, then requisite we should serve him aright, we desire that some Rules may be appointed for Order, Uniformity, Dowry, and expedience in the publick worship, especially that there may be a rule prescribed for the Administration of the holy Sacraments, which in these unsetled times, have been very slightly, and we fear by some not very Rightly Administred; that our People may be assured they have and receive Sacraments and not Nullities.

Fourthly, And that the blessed Sacrament of the Lords Supper (the strongest Soul of our Communion with our Head and with one another, but made in these dayes the greatest bone of contention) may be with profit and comfort Administred and Received, that the great and most needful duty of Catechising

chiſing may be with ſtrictneſs enjoyned to Paſtors and People, and when by Catechiſing, Chriſtians ſhall come to underſtand and believe aright the Principles of Chriſtian Religion, they may be brought to give a publick account of their knowledge and faith, and by Confirmation (ever acknowledged and of late aſſerted to be an Apoſtolical Practiſe) be declared capable of that Bleſſed Communion, whereby the ſo much, and ſo juſtly complained of ignorance will be prevented; and for ſcandal, the other complaint, that thoſe who ſhall be known notoriouſly offenſive in their lives, may without reſpect of perſons be cenſured by Excommunication.

Fifthly, That the Lords Day in theſe looſe and licentious times, wickedly profaned and wretchedly neglected, may be more religiouſly obſerved and ſpent in publick and private Duties of Gods worſhip, and the profaners thereof may be impartially puniſhed, and the penalties impartially taken and beſtowed upon the Poor, which will be at once an act of Juſtice, Piety, and Charity.

Sixthly, Since *Pruritus diſputandi* is *ſcabies Eccleſiæ*, Diſputations engender and encreaſe ſtrife and contention, and we may with as much ſhame as truth ſay, *Diſputamus non Vivimus*, that Controverſies and Thorny queſtions and Diſputations in religion may be prohibited in publick aſſemblies, that the weak be received, but not to doubtful Diſputations, the Pulpits be not turned into the Schools, and the people amuſed and diſtracted inſtead of being inſtructed; But that faith, Repentance, Godlineſs, and the weighty things of Chriſtianity may be preached and preſs'd, we may have no enmity but with thoſe who are open enemies to the true Religion, and amongſt our ſelves there may be no hammers heard in the Building of Gods Temple.

Seventhly, That to this end, for the caſting of all Diſcords and Diſſentions into the bottome of the Sea, with a Milſtone about their necks, all odious diſtinguiſhing and provoking names and titles of Diviſion, as *Lutherans*, *Calviniſts*, *Prelatiſts*, *Presbyterians* may be aboliſhed, and if any other name be judged neceſſary to be added to that of Chriſtian, it may be onely that wherein all the Reformed Churches do agree, that of Reformed or *Proteſtant*.

For the Miniſters of the Church our Prayer is

Firſt, Since God is the God of Order and not of Confuſion, and hath ſet up a clear rule for the Orderly Calling of his Miniſters, and hath declared in all ages his ſevere wrath againſt Intruders and Uſurpers upon that ſacred office, the ſad effects of which preſumption, no age or Church hath felt more then in theſe our dayes this our Church; that no perſon of what pretended gifts or parts ſoever, may be ſuffered to perform the Miniſterial office in any part thereof, without a lawful Call and Commiſſion thereunto, by Impoſition of hands and Ordination.

Secondly, That it may not be left arbitrary for any Number of Miniſters in any place, by any form they pleaſe, to aſſociate and ordain any perſons they pleaſe, (we deſiring not to except againſt the paſt Ordinations of any in theſe unſetled times;) but that by this aſſembly ſuch a manner and form may be determined, that neither by the Number the Church may be charged with Superfluous Miniſters without Charge or Cure of Souls, nor by the manner of Ordination, the Romiſh Adverſary may have matter of ſuch Exception, but that we may be able as hitherto we have done, by the Scripture Rules, and the wholſome Canons of the Ancient Church, to vindicate and make good againſt them, and all other oppoſers, our holy function and ſacred Profeſſion.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, That there may be known places of recourse both for Ordination and Institution, in some convenient Vicinity in all parts of this Nation, that Ministers may not be put to a needless expense of time and charge; Some in these *Northern* Countries having small means, being able sadly to testifie, that when institution (such as it was) was onely to be had in one place, it hath cost them for the obtaining thereof, a whole years Revenue.

Fourthly, Since Ministers have been made offenders for a word, and every of their offences have been counted mortal, and punished with a Civil Death, a final deprivation; yea many without any known offence, against any known Law, have been deprived by the meer power and will of their Judges and Accusers (not that we would excuse or extenuate, much less justifie any offence in our selves, well knowing, that Ministers (as *Uzziah* his Leaprosy) carry their faults in their foreheads, and by reason of the sacredness of our Calling what is a sin in others, is in us no less then a Sacriledge) we desire that there may be wholsome Canons made and stamped with publick Authority, that we may know the rule we are to walk by, and walking by that Rule we may walk fearlesly, and not be liable to be ruined by mens wills and lusts, so long as we offend not any known Law.

Fifthly, Since every profession should competently maintain the Professor, and God hath ordained that as those who waited upon the Altar did live by the Altar; so those who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel, and for want of due maintenance many Ministers are despised, discouraged from painfulness in their Calling, and by Indigency and necessity put upon actions unworthy and unsuitable to their profession; as also many Parishes have insufficient, and many no Ministers, to the dishonour of God, scandal of Reformation, and the endangering of many souls into eternal Perdition, we desire some Course may be timely taken that every Parish (every one having therein many souls, and every soul more worth then a world) may have a provision of competent and indifferent Maintenance for a preaching Minister, least it be sadly true of many Parishes, which some Pharisaical, separating Spirits have as untruly, as uncharitably affirmed of all our Parochial Churches, that they are no Churches of Christ, wanting (for the onely want of Maintenance) those notes of the Church, the preaching of the word and Administration of the Sacraments.

Sixthly, That until such provision can be made (which must be a work of some time) the Ministers of the adjacent Parishes, may be enjoyned to preach by course in such vacant places, that Gods people may not perish for lack of knowledge, nor wholly want the Means of life, for the onely want of Means for a Ministers Livelyhood.

Seventhly, That the Just and Legal Rights and Immunities of the Church and Clergy may be restored and confirmed, and that we of the Clergy (once called and counted one of the three estates of the Realm) may be (as all the rest of our fellow Subjects are) some way Represented in Parliament, that so (as it is with all other Subjects) the Duties and Taxes imposed upon us, may be by our own voluntary Act; and though we have had a great (that we say not the greatest) share in the sufferings of the Nation, and been most deeply charged, yet when the necessities of the King and Kingdome require, we, and we doubt not our Brethren shall be willing to grant such Subsidies, as may in some measure express our grateful sense of the restitution of our Just properties and priviledges.

We

We will conclude, craving pardon as for the Prolixity, so for the particularity of this addresse, humbly and unfeignedly professing, that if in any (as we believe in many) of these Particulars, the piety and wisdome of a National Counsel shall order otherwise, we for our parts shall (and we desire our Brethren will) as obedient sons of the Church deny our own private desires, affections, passions, interests, esteeming our selves obliged to sacrifice all that is ours unto peace, especially to the best peace, the peace of the Church, most of all to the peace of this Church, so long and so sadly divided and Dilacerated, and now in hope to be happily healed and united: we who have taught others, are now put upon a Tryal, whether we can learn the lesson of *Self-Denial* our selves, and if we hold no Men or Counsel of men infallible, much less may we hold our selves so; if we be *Israelites* so are others, if we be Ministers, so are they, if we be Conscientious so are they, if we be Judicious so are they and more, we desire that we all remember that of *Augustine*, *Contra rationem nemo sobrius*, *contra Scripturam nemo Christianus*, *contra Ecclesiam nemo Pacificus senserit*, to which we will add that Grave and godly saying of that forementioned Divine, let it be remembred that when the Lord is pleased to make overtures of peace, they that hinder it out of study of sides, or for maintaining of parties, or for any other indirect end, shall answer to God for all the Mischief, Blood and Ruine shall follow: we have learnt that God alone hath the Judgment of infallibility, that he hath given to Christians generally the Judgment of Discretion, to Ministers the Judgment of Direction, to Counsels the Judgment of Jurisdiction, whose determinations though not infallible, yet surely an assembly of Learned, Godly, and Grave Divines, being lawfully called, and in the fear of God convened, we presume less subject to be deceived then one or a few private persons, and their unanimous Judgment ought not by any private persons to be contemned or contradicted, but even against our own Judgment (in Matters by the Scripture not determined) we are to submit (by acquiescence at least) to the Judgment of a Lawful Councel: and this we for our selves profess and promise to do, resolving to espouse no private opinion, from which for the peace of the Church we shall not be willing to be divorced, yea we esteem it most conducible to the happy Compromise and Closure of our divisions that peace may be a gainer (so far as truth may be no looser) that all Dissenting parties may be loosers recede somewhat from the rigour of their opinions, & bend towards each other in a Christian and charitable compliance, the way to satisfie all being to satisfie none to the utmost of their rigorous Demands and desires. We have done hoping to see those who are better furnished, bring richer Materials for the repairing. For us being able to do no more, we could do no less, then bring a little Lime or Mortar for the Cementing and helping to make up the Breaches of Gods Temple. The Lord grant unto our gracious King, noble Parliament and worthy Rulers, The spirit of Courage, Counsel, Religion, and Righteousnes; To Ministers the spirit of Unity, charity, Piety, and Moderation; To all Christians to believe aright and live aright, to be sound in the faith and sanctifyed in Life; That the Lord may return unto us, delight in us, dwell among us, That Mercy and Truth, Righteousnes and peace may embrace each other, and that the Light of the Gospel (the light of our eyes, and the life of our Souls) may be Continued unto us and our Generations after us, so long as the light of the Sun and Moon endures.

FINIS.